

California, Washington, Idaho 1-2-3 in Western ag production

By [Sean Ellis](#) -Capital Press- September 20, 2013 12:03PM



Dan Wheat/Capital Press A combine harvests wheat on the Nelson Farm near LaMoine, Wash., on Aug. 14. Washington state is No. 2 in overall farmgate receipts in the West, ahead of Idaho and behind California.

BOISE — The most recent state rankings for total agricultural production show California lapping the field and Washington ahead of Idaho in the race for the No. 2 spot among the 11 Western states last year.

But while Idaho ranks third in the West for total farmgate receipts, it is an unchallenged No. 1 in ag production on a per capita basis.

California stands alone when it comes to farmgate receipts, with an estimated \$44.6 billion worth of crop and livestock production in 2012, according to USDA's Economic Research Service.

Total farmgate receipts in Washington during 2012 reached \$9.6 billion, ranking that state second in the West, ahead of Idaho's \$7.8 billion total, according to University of Idaho agricultural economist Ben Eborn, who compiles the rankings each September.

Idaho passed Colorado for the No. 3 spot in 2011 with \$7.4 billion in farmgate receipts and had been gaining on Washington, trailing that state by \$1.4 billion in 2011. But the Evergreen state gained \$400 million on the Gem State in 2012 primarily because of record apple production and prices.

The farmgate value of Washington's apple crop soared from \$1.8 million in 2011 to more than \$3 billion in 2012, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Idaho gained \$200 million in ag production on Colorado in 2012. Colorado ranked fourth last year with \$7.3 billion in farmgate receipts and was followed by Oregon, which remained at \$4.7 billion, unchanged from 2011.

Montana and New Mexico both totaled \$4 billion in ag receipts in 2012 and were followed by Arizona at \$3.8 billion, Utah at \$1.6 billion, Wyoming at \$1.5 billion and Nevada at \$700 million.

The rankings compiled by Eborn also show that on a per capita basis, Idaho produced \$4,901 worth of crop and livestock production per resident in 2012.

No other state in the West is even close to that total. Washington's per capita total is \$1,388,

Oregon's is \$1,218 and California's is \$1,171.

The per capita number is a simple but effective way to show Idaho's leaders how important agriculture is to the state's economy, Eborn said.

"Our economy is heavily dependent on agriculture," he said. "We're a small state population-wise but ... our ag economy is massive for the small population we have."

Idaho's total ag production has grown at a 6.3 percent annual rate since 2000, trailing only Montana's 6.8 percent rate. Washington's ag production has grown at 4.7 percent since then, California has grown at 4.4 percent and Oregon at 3.6 percent.

At Idaho's current growth rate, the state's total agricultural production will double in 12 years, said UI ag economist Garth Taylor.

"That's amazing, a doubling in the size of our ag production in 12 years. Wow," he said. "I'm very optimistic we'll overtake Washington one of these days (because) we're growing faster."